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ABSTRACT

One of the ways in which the National Institute of Education (NIE) seeks to increase opportunities for women and minorities in the field of educational research is through the sponsorship of internships or mentorships at the college/university level. This practice was begun in response to a number of studies that showed the correlation between research assistantships and postgraduate employment in research and development. Essentially three types of mentorship programs are funded by NIE: (1) those within an institution of higher education: (2) those between two institutions of higher education, or between a university and one or more school districts: and (3) those that involve matching applicants and mentors from a national pool of universities and research organizations. The individual mentor relationships vary in terms of structure, distance between mentor and intern, and the type of research conducted. Some of the outcomes that may accrue to a student from a successful mentorship are acquisition of social skills, introduction to useful networks, and acceptance in certain professional settings because of an association with a more prominent researcher. (Author/GC)

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FEDERALLY SPONSORED MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS TO INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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The National Institute of Education (NIE) Minorities and Women's Program is designed to strengthen the quality, relevance and credibility of Educational Research through greater inclusion of the contributions and perspectives of women and minority group members who have been historically underrepresented in the field. Three priority objectives of the Program are:

1. To assist institutions to establish policies and practices that (a) enhance participation on minorities and women in research and (b) overcome barriers to recognizing their research contributions and interests.

2. To assist experienced minority and women researchers to participate at an advanced level of educational R&D and related work; and

3. To develop the required knowledge, information and designs to advance the first two objectives.

Since 1977, some 60 projects involving 700 participants have received one-year or multiple-year funding through the Minorities and Women's Program. If we were also to include persons attending the lectures, seminars and symposia supported by the Program, the number of participants would be about double. 60% of the awards are made to post-secondary institutions, with the remainder of monies going to federal research laboratories and centers, state educational agencies, local educational agencies and national professional organizations. For fiscal year 1980, the funding portfolio included 50 projects in 37 cities for a total of about $3 million. It should be emphasized that since the word "women" does

not connote a monolothic group and since the needs of racial and ethnic minorities differ within as well as among groups, the strategies for achieving the program objectives are necessarily diverse. The several approaches include coursework or seminars on research design and implementation, collaborative research, workshops and symposia on current research issues, and support for development and publication of monographs. Our purpose today is to examine one of the strategies for achieving program goals, that is the research mentorship. Rarely does an organization receive funds for the sole purpose of establishing mentorships; that approach is usually combined with some other form of support for the newer researcher. The aspects of mentorships that will be covered in this presentation are: (a) A brief rationale of program planners for recommending the mentorship approach (b) descriptions of some alternative mentorship models funded by this program; and (c) observations on the nature of the mentorship for some participants.

Although the first grants competition for the Minorities and Women's Program did not occur until 1977, NIE studies on minorities and women in research professions began as early as 1973. After 1975 when the policy making body for NIE resolved to establish programs for women and minorities, planning began with a series of conferences and commissioned papers. One of these papers cited studies by Reskin which pointed out the correlations between research assistantships and employment in research and development. Reskin noted that persons who hold graduate research assistantships are about twice as likely to be employed in research positions after graduation as persons who did not. This observation was found to be true for both men and women in the field of education, social science, and psychology

and for minority persons in the field of education. While post-doctoral study is linked to research and development careers, the author noted that few minorities had plans for postdoctoral study. Women were more likely than men to enter postdoctoral positions but women tended to accept positions which had less prestige and which offered limited opportunities for career enhancement.[1/]

Another report in the NIE series presented findings from a survey of then-existing programs for minorities and women in education-related fields. The report contrasted those programs which supported individual awards for academic study with those programs that supported internships. It stated that the individual award programs often had little or no input regarding the objectives, basic structure, staffing and content of the training opportunities. The pools of women and minorities were indeed produced through these training programs, but tended to lack the skill base required for immediate entry into the research market place. By comparison the authors wrote:

> "The reverse tends to be true with programs that support the internship model. Because these programs seek out sponsors who are amenable to functioning as mentors and involving participants in the dynamics and politics of decision making, they play a major role in shaping the character of the internship experience."[2/]

Finally another collection of papers in the NIE series focused on barriers which impede women's progress in educational research. Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic and American Indian women were invited to list barriers for women in their respective culture at several stages of the

research career, and they were asked to make policy recommendations to address the problems. In summing up concerns common to all participants, the editor wrote:

> "The predominance of a male faculty population in institutions of higher learning continues to exclude women students from the mentor and sponsor relationships which traditionally have indoctrinated the student or younger professional to the internal politics and operations of the professional arena. Their exclusion from such mentor or protegé relationship perpetuates the exclusion of women from the networks or invisible colleges which operate to keep circles of colleagues informally apprised of developments."[3/]

A later conference on minority women in educational R&D resulted in recommendation for internship programs as early as high school. This then, represented the thinking in the development of the program. Planners felt that the major advantages of mentorships were access to timely and pragmatic professional information and the sense of politics imparted to the newer researcher. We turn now to the types of mentor relationships funded by the program. Note that a 3-year program evaluation is now underway so that formal observations on mentorships will be available at a later time.

For projects funded through this program, recruitment and matching of mentors and mentees occur in 3 patterns: within, between and among institutions. One example of mentorship within an institution is the project funded to the City University of New York (CUNY). Senior research

faculty are paired with junior colleagues and a limited number of undergraduate students across the 20 colleges of CUNY. The teams of faculty and student researchers collaborate for 2 years to develop, implement and publish research in the broad area of urban education. Mentors receive modest consulting fees and, according to the project director, they are "seen as pivotal in the professional socialization of women and minorities in educational R&D."[4/] Similar institutional mentorships or faculty development projects have been funded to the University of Tennessee and to Virginia State University.

The matching of mentors and mentees between institutions may be very profitable or very problematic depending on the nature and extent of communication between the schools before the grant award. One cooperative arrangement that has worked well is the University of Michigan/Hampton Institute project. The larger mid-western university has a total research budget which exceeds that of the National Institute of Education, and the southern four-year, predominatly Black College has historical emphasis on teaching rather than research. The project combines Michigan senior faculty, junior faculty and graduate students with Hampton faculty in three variations of teams. Evaluation plans include an assessment of the effectiveness of each variation. Project directors identified mentors on the basis of research expertise and national visibility. The directors then reviewed participant areas of interest and composed research teams based on those interests. The advantages and disavantages of third-party matching will be discussed in another paper, but in this case the matches worked well. Indeed, some of the mentors returned the cash incentives offered to them.

Some collaborative relationships do present problems. In one instance the host research institution had not fully clarified the needs or level of commitment of the teaching institution before the grant was awarded. Experience has shown that bilateral arrangements work well if the two schools jointly determine project goals and if they take time to discuss such details as faculty release time and project budget administration before submitting the proposal.

A variation of the bilateral collaboration involves a university and one or more school districts. Faculty from the university educational school conduct seminars and collaborate in research with practitioners from a local educational agency. The intent here is not to turn full-time administrators into full-time researchers, but rather to give them a sense of how research may be designed and implemented to meet the needs of their particular districts. Technical assistance is offered to the practitioners as they conduct their own studies after a year or two in the project. The University of Minnesota and San Diego State University have received funding to establish mentorships of this kind, and results from some of those research collaborations are being presented at this conference.

The most prevalent type of recruitment and matching is done among institutions nationwide and involves some 50% of the projects funded by the Minorities and Women's Program. In most cases, the junior researchers are chosen from a national pool of applicants to work with mentors at a given university or R&D organization. In a few cases, renown scholars are invited to spend residence as mentors to individuals or to small

research teams. The advantage of recruiting and matching from a national pool is that it increases the possibility of an ethnically and professionally diverse clientele. A disadvantage is that more time may be required to establish a good working relationship between persons who do not have common institutional affiliations. The University of Southern California and the Institute of Educational Leadership add another dimension to national matching by structuring fellowships and internships with federal administrators and research policy makers.

To be sure, not all of the projects funded by the Minorities and Women's Program fall neatly into the schema of intra-institutional, inter-institutional and national recruitment pattern. Some schools as the University of Alabama, Michigan State University, and New Mexico State University, are experimenting with a combination of the three. If nothing else, these examples will show the diversity of the funded projects.

The individual mentor relationships themselves also vary from highly to casually structured. At one end of the continuum participants are matched to sponsors based on an essay on their career goals. After some discussion the mentor and mentee agree on a contract which specifies the desired outcomes and even amount of hours of activities that the mentor will oversee. Contact between mentor and mentee is made daily and the junior colleague is often invited to meetings and appointments with mentor. The two collaborate on a given project and publish findings together.

Other projects are experimenting with the multiple mentorship approach. As stated in a recent project directors' conference, the three important

variables which should be considered in matching a mentor to a mentee are substantive interests, race and sex. For example, evidence was published as recently as May, 1979 which suggested, that cross-sex mentorships tend not to be successful.[5/] More than one mentor may be necessary then. At one educational R&D laboratory the intern works equally with an advisor and with the project director. The mentor offers technical research assistance and other professional information, and the project director provides guidelines for advising the intern in knowledge and skill development. Participants are encouraged to interact with other laboratory personnel according to their research needs and according to the areas of expertise among senior researchers.

At the other end of the spectrum are those who claim that the concept of "Multiple Mentorships" is a contradiction in terms. One project has no mentorships but rather a collective advisory committee available to newer researchers at the worksite on a daily basis. The responsibility for professional development, then, belongs to all rather than any one of the senior researchers.

Somewhere near the middle of spectrum is the long-distance mentor such as the one described in the Michigan-Hampton project. Some would argue that the long distance mentor is more aptly described as a research consultant or an academic advisor. We contend that a mentor is one who exceeds an academic advisor by providing timely information in funding, publishing and employment possibilities and by contributing to the political awareness of the mentee. In that broad context a mentorship can be handled through frequent telephone calls and periodic visits.

Sometimes, though, the long distance mentor can be too distant. For example, a certain group of participants had access to a very prominent group of researchers and policy makers. There were no formal matchings but there was an agreement that the mentors would offer advice and referral to anyone who needed assistance. Contact between mentors and participants occurred primarily at receptions and conferences. While the mentors were geographically distributed throughout the country, participants had the use of phone and postage. The researchers in this project were not hesitant to label this arrangement a false mentorship. Although each potential mentor had the prestige to "charter" a participant, that is lend instant acceptability to a participant with a quick, appropriately targeted telephone call, the evidence suggests that at least some minimal matching may be necessary for projectslike this one. Of course, if these participants actually benefitted from the leadership skills seminars offered to them, they realize by now that they are plugged into a network that they should not hesitate to utilize throughout their careers.

The last illustration raises a dilemma which we have not yet resolved. Project directors agreed that the ideal mentor is one who is prominent in the field, who is motivated, who demonstrates a commitment to equity in education and who is available to the mentee. Since national prominence and visibility seriously limit mentor availability and vice-versa, it is often the responsibility of the project director to determine the appropriate balance. That guess is often difficult.

In sum, the NIE Minorities and Women's Program funds projects to increase equity among educational R&D personnel, and the mentorship is one of several ways expand to accomplish that goal. We have observed these outcomes from the mentorships:

Acquisition of social skills, introduction to useful networks, and acceptance of new researchers in certain professional settings because of their association with more prominent researchers.

The ideal mentorship, of course, is one that achieves all three of these outcomes. It may take years to determine the full results of the federally brokered mentorships, but there is no doubt that the Program has contributed to the cadre of minorities and women in the R&D arena.

NOTES

1. Reskin in Participation of Women and Minority Subgroups in Research Related Activities in the Field of Education by John C. Egermeier. Washington: National Institute of Education, January 1977, pp. 4-1 to 4-3.

2. Elias Blake and Mary Williams, Survey of Existing Knowledge Producation and Utilization Programs for Women and Minorities in Education and Parallel Fields. Washington: National Institute of Education, October 1976, pp. 37-38.

3. Patricia Stivers. NIE/AERA Planning Conference to Increase the Participation of Women and Minorities in Educational Research and Development. Washington: National Institute for Community Development, May 1977, p. 5.

4. Experimental Program for Opportunities in Advanced Study and Research in Education, Project Abstracts. Washington: National Institute of Education, 1979, p. 19.

5. Elise Goldstein. "The Effect of Same Sex and Cross Sex Role Models on the Subsequent Academic Productivity of Scholars", American Psychologist, vol. 34, May, 1979, pp. 407-410.